

position of the control portion relative to the base portion, and at least a second signal indicating user data input requests.

54. The input device of claim 53 wherein the connector comprises a gimbal mechanism.

55. The input device of claim 53 further comprising a rotational mechanism which permits a user to rotate the control portion with respect to the base portion, wherein the signal generator is operatively connected to the rotational mechanism and generates a signal indicating rotational position of the control portion with respect to the base portion.

56. The input device of claim 53, wherein the control portion is configured to permit a user's hand to be positioned on said control portion such that the user's hand is substantially parallel to said control portion.

57. The input device of claim 53 wherein the plurality of inputs comprises at least four keys.

58. The input device of claim 57, wherein a key is provided for each digit of a hand.

59. The input device of claim 57, wherein at least one of said keys is a multiple position key, wherein said multiple position key can be moved in a plurality of directions and selectively engaged in at least one of the plurality of directions.

60. The input device of claim 59, wherein the multiple position key is provided for the user's thumb.

61. The input device of claim 57 wherein the plurality of inputs further comprises at least one slider.

62. The input device of claim 53, wherein at least three of said inputs are located in substantially the same plane.

63. A computer system comprising:

a memory;

at least one input device comprising:

a base portion;

a control portion;

a plurality of inputs disposed on said control portion, said plurality of inputs receiving user data requests;

a connector connecting each control portion to said base portion and for permitting a user to move the control portion with respect to the base portion; and

a signal generator operatively connected to the plurality of inputs and the connector, for generating at least one first signal indicating a movement or position of the control portion relative to the base portion, and at least one second signal indicating user data input requests;

a processor operatively connected to said signal generator for receiving and processing the first and second signals; and

a display operatively connected to the processor for displaying an image generated by said processor.

64. The computer system of claim 63 wherein said plurality of inputs comprises at least four keys.

65. The computer system of claim 64 wherein said plurality of inputs further comprises at least one slider.

66. The computer system of claim 64 having at least two input devices.

67. The computer system of claim 64, further comprising:

a character selection graphic displayed on the display, the character selection graphic comprising a plurality of character selection icons, each of the icons corresponding to a character or a function;

wherein the character selection icons are selected by moving or positioning the control portion relative to the base portion and selectively engaging one of the plurality of inputs.

68. The computer system of claim 67, wherein the character selection graphic comprises a plurality of groupings of character selection icons, each grouping of character selection icons comprising a plurality of rows of character selection icons.

69. The computer system of claim 68 wherein each input on the control portion corresponds to a character selection icon in the row of character selection icons.

70. The computer system of claim 63, wherein the input device is wirelessly connected to the processor.

71. The computer system of claim 63, wherein at least three of said inputs are located in substantially the same plane.

72. A method for selecting characters or function and inputting the same to a computer system, comprising:

displaying a character selection graphic on a display, the character selection graphic comprising a character selection box for each input device, the character selection box including a character selection grouping and a function grouping;

selecting a desired character selection grouping of character selection icons within the character selection box;

selecting a desired row of character selection icons;

selectively engaging an one of the keys on a control portion of an input device corresponding to a desired character selection icon;

generating at least one signal indicating the selected character selection icon; and

receiving and processing the signal.

73. The method of claim 72, wherein each grouping of character selection icons for one hand comprises at least two rows of character selection icons, and each row of character selection icons comprises four character selection icons.

74. The method of claim 72, wherein the step of selecting a desired grouping of character selection icons comprises:

moving the control portion relative to a base portion to display a desired grouping of character selection icons in the character selection box.

75. The method of claim 72, wherein the step of selecting a desired grouping of character selection icons comprises:

positioning the control portion relative to a base portion to display a desired grouping of character selection icons in the character selection box.

76. The method of claim 72, wherein the step of selecting a desired row of character selection icons comprises:

moving the control portion relative to a base portion to select a desired row of character selection icons.

77. The method of claim 72, wherein the step of selecting a desired row of character selection icons comprises:

positioning the control portion relative to a base portion to select a desired row of character selection icons.

78. The method of claim 76, wherein the selected row of character selection icons is highlighted.
79. The method of claim 77 wherein the selected row of character selection icons is highlighted.
80. The method of claim 72, further comprising:
selecting a function from the function grouping by manipulating a key assigned to a thumb.
81. The method of claim 72, wherein the character presentation graphic is transparent.
82. The method of claim 72, wherein the character presentation graphic may be turned off.
83. The method of claim 72, wherein a size of the character selection box can be changed by a user.
84. The method of claim 72, wherein the number of character selection icons in a row can be changed by a user.
85. The method of claim 72, wherein the layout of characters and functions in the character selection graphic can be changed by a user.
86. The method of claim 72, wherein the character presentation graphic is two-dimensional.
87. The method of claim 72, wherein the character presentation graphic further comprises a three-dimensional function menu.
88. The method of claim 87, wherein the three-dimensional function menu is activated by manipulating a thumb key.
89. The method of claim 72, wherein a size of the character selection graphic may be manipulated with a slider.
90. The method of claim 72, wherein one of the input devices may select character selection icons from more than one character selection boxes.
91. The method of claim 72, wherein at least two input devices are provided.
92. The method of claim 91, wherein each input device is used to select the character selection icons for the other input device.--